

Price of Petroleum

debate; it warrants discussion; it warrants a procedure quite different from the one we saw today.

The impact at the pump? Two and a half cents. That is no big deal, but the impact at the furnace of two and a half cents is a big deal for a lot of people. The impact on Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island which use oil to generate electricity is a big deal. There would be a significant impact there. The people concerned deserve to be notified by their federal government. They deserve an explanation, in advance, from their federal government.

There is no reason for this kind of covert approach. As a matter of courtesy the province of Alberta deserved to be notified. No one was notified, certainly no one in this House, certainly not the public. Suddenly, at twelve o'clock on a Friday, there is a new tax, a new procedure is implemented, a new levy, a new impact. It is very significant. We deserved to be notified.

Madam Speaker, I also have to draw attention to the real tragedy with respect to energy in this country. It is recognized that the energy situation is mixed in with the constitutional situation where there is a jurisdictional problem. There are tremendous problems in terms of price, constitutional authority and revenue distribution around the country. They require tact and diplomacy in order to be resolved. In a couple of weeks the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the Premier of Alberta will be sitting down hopefully to resolve the issue. This will require good will from the government opposite. It will also require good will from the producing provinces. And good will is not engendered by the kind of cheap shots one finds in this document. For example, talking about the levy and the funds therefrom, the press release says:

It contributes to payment of Alberta and other royalties, capital and operating costs.

Now, that is not technically incorrect. But, Madam Speaker, the minister, if he were so inclined, might also have said that it contributes to the profits of Petro-Canada as an owner of Syncrude. It contributes to the salaries of people who are employed in that plant. It contributes to the economic benefit of the people in that part of the country. He could have said all those things. But, no, he tried, and in his remarks again he tried, to leave the implication that somehow this is a levy being imposed upon the whole country which the government is forced into and which is going into the already bulging coffers of the province of Alberta.

● (1720)

That is simply not true, and that kind of cheap shot, which he never ceases to grab an opportunity to use, is hardly going to make it easier for the Prime Minister and the premier to arrive at an agreement, which I assume everybody in this House and everybody in the country wants. I assume nobody wants a donnybrook, a fight or a constitutional crisis, but that is what is going to happen if this approach is continued to be used and if those kinds of cheap shots are continued.

I wonder what the governments of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are thinking about now when they are faced

with electricity rates going up significantly as a result of this levy. Do hon. members not think there might have been a little goodwill engendered had they been warned, telephoned or told about this? It is almost a motherhood statement to say one should consult and advise and let one's peers or contemporaries who are affected know, yet that fundamental and simple thought does not seem to occur to hon. members opposite.

I was curious about the language used by the minister in his opening remarks. He said that the words of the motion are similar to those which are in the Petroleum Administration Act. They are identical. Are we now to see a different procedure again from that which we have discussed and argued? The language there seemed to imply that the government is attempting to develop some new alternative. If that is the case, I hope the government will have the good sense and common courtesy to discuss it with those on this side of the House who have responsibilities in that area, and perhaps we could get on with what the public out there expects us to do, and that is to debate and discuss rationally and act in a way which is to the benefit of the country. We should not carry on with this ridiculous procedure of bringing in new government collections through this back door procedure. These collections will have a horrendous impact.

Before closing I have to say again that another 2.5 cents a gallon has come along. There have been increases; we are going to be getting more, presumably. That underlines the absolute necessity of a coherent energy policy from this government soon, and a budget soon. Because it cannot be said often enough or loudly enough that we recognized what was happening and put in the December 11 budget provisions to help those who are affected and to help those in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island who generate their electricity from petroleum, those on low incomes and those who use heating oil to heat their homes. None of that has been forthcoming from the other side of the House. All we have had is two and a half cents here and two and a half cents there.

Mr. McDermid: Sneaky by degree.

Mr. Andre: Sneaky by degree, and the over-all impact of that is far more horrendous to the consumers of Canada than would have been the case had the December 11 budget been adopted. It is time, for the sake of Canada, to put Canada ahead of pride. I know the government will have to do some flip-flops in order to do the right thing for Canada, but it should take the embarrassment and do the flip-flops and the right things for Canada. The country needs it.

Mr. Ian Waddell (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, the hon. member for Calgary Centre (Mr. Andre), who just spoke, says that the minister should put Canada ahead of pride. I would like to see him put Canada ahead of private profit. To be frank, whether this is a tax or a levy does not really concern me. What it means is one-half cent per litre or two and a half cents per gallon, as the hon. member for Calgary Centre said. It means taking it out of the average person's pocket and putting into the pockets of oil companies.